

Comrade Chemodanov (Y.C.I.)

The economic crisis which for many years has been raging in the capitalist countries weighs most heavily upon the growing generation of the toiling masses. In the millions strong army of unemployed the youth occupy a very important place and the number of unemployed youths is counted by the millions. This army of unemployed young workers shows a tendency to grow further more rapidly than the army of unemployed adult workers.

Within the last year or two of the economic crisis the unemployed youth in almost all capitalist countries have been taken off unemployment benefit. It is necessary to see in all clarity that among the young toilers of the capitalist countries a section of youth is constantly growing who have never done any work. Not only the workers' children and the children of the toiling peasants, but also the sons and daughters of the petty-bourgeoisie, of the so-called middle classes, and the formerly materially secure intellectuals are more and more having the ground cut from under their feet. The labour of the youth is paid lower, and the conditions of apprenticeship take on an ever more brutal character.

If we add to this that the youth in the reformist trade unions is deprived of all rights and that its interests are not defended in any way, not to speak about the peasant youth, which is subjected to the most cruel exploitation by landlords and usurers, and that the youth in most countries has been robbed of almost all political rights, then we receive a clear picture of the sufferings of the toiling youth.

The broad masses of the youth are being more and more drawn into the class struggle. Communist influence, which is constantly spreading in the working class, becomes stronger and stronger among the youth. Thus we see that most of all in the strike struggles, in the revolutionary actions of the unemployed and peasantry, in the revolutionary struggles of the Chinese proletariat and peasantry, in the struggle against fascism in Germany, Poland and other countries, in the struggle against new imperialist wars, the youth play a very important role. The political activity of the youth is growing, having as its basis dissatisfaction with conditions and the attempt to find a way out of its situation. However, this activity has not yet assumed a sufficiently political character from a class point of view. The youth is now confronted with questions of vital importance and is seeking a reply to these questions. Because it does not always find an answer in the Communist Party and the Y.C.I. it is easily led astray by pseudo-radical slogans and phrases and by the chauvinistic and nationalist demagoguery of the fascists.

Nevertheless the bourgeoisie, faced with the growth of Communist influence among the youth and the growth of political activity of the young toilers, is compelled to revise all its methods and means of ideologically enslaving the youth and to seek stronger means under the present conditions of preparation for a new round of revolutions and war. Together with the bourgeoisie

this is also being done by the social democracy, the main social support of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie has succeeded in creating a whole network of youth organisations based upon the various needs, interests and aspirations of the youth.

These organisations created by the bourgeoisie arrange their work in such a way that in form they cater for the interests of the youth, but in essence their aim is to train the youth for complete subordination to capital.

In Great Britain the bourgeois youth organisations have a membership of over seven million, our Young Communist League in Britain has only seven hundred members. In Germany, for example, before Hitler came to power, out of seven million youths, five million were members of bourgeois organisations. In Japan, the youth organisations of the military-fascist type have a membership of about five million. The same is true of the United States, and particularly of France, where special attention is devoted to activities among young women in industry, because French imperialism perfectly realises the role of women in industry, and especially in the hinterland during the coming war.

Millions of young workers are in the reformist, Christian and similar trade unions. The fact that the young workers are members of these organisations does not mean that they are isolated from the class struggle. Regardless of their affiliation to the bourgeois or reformist organisations, the youth take active part in strike struggles and in the revolutionary actions of the unemployed and peasantry.

The bourgeoisie more and more resorts to forcing the youth to join its organisations. At present it is no longer the individual political parties who lead these organisations, but the state apparatus. Only recently this applied only to Yugoslavia, where all young people up to 21 years of age were compelled to become members of a semi-military organisation of the "Sokol" type; to Hungary, where a similar organisation ("Levente") exists, and to Poland, where there exists the mass organisation "Strelak." But now this is becoming characteristic of many other countries.

In Germany the bourgeoisie began a long time ago to introduce forced labour for the youth. This was done with the direct support of German social democracy even before Hitler came to power, when several hundreds of thousands of youth were sent to forced labour camps. At present this form of forced labour is characteristic not only for Germany, but for the United States, where already several hundred thousand young workers are involved, and characteristic also for Czechoslovakia, Poland and Bulgaria, Great Britain and a number of other countries. An especially rapid development of compulsory labour has taken place in Germany after the establishment of the fascist dictatorship. The fascists hope in 1934 to bring into this scheme all the unemployed youth, including the students. This means nothing less than that fascism is trying by means of terror and compulsion to

strengthen the influence of finance capital among the youth, to train the youth in the spirit of chauvinism and nationalism and to prepare new cadres for the coming wars.

The same thing in essence is being carried out by the bourgeoisie in other countries, although some of our comrades do not always see this and do not understand that it is by no means a rule that the chauvinist and nationalist education of the youth must go along the model of German fascism.

The German bourgeoisie draws the youth into the Hitler youth organisations without liquidating the Christian youth organisation, which is a mass movement, led, to be sure, by Hitlerites, but taking in certain groups of youth who are not willing to join open fascist organisations.

In Italy there exists an organisation, the Dopolavoro, with over two million youth members. This organisation has about 18,000 sections, of which 3,000 are industrial units and include numerous apparently most divergent youth organisations. In adapting this Italian model of the fascist organisation of the youth to German conditions, the national socialists consider as their main task the establishment of a network of different youth organisations under the leadership and control of the state.

The social-fascist leaders have already in previous years tried at the Paris Congress of the Y.S.I. (Young Socialist International) to lead the growing political activity of the youth into opportunistic channels. They talked a lot about the fascist danger, capitalism and socialism. Friedrich Adler and others placed before the members of the Y.S.I. the task of finding a "middle road" between reformism and Bolshevism, and declared likewise in the most shameless manner that there was no difference between fascist and proletarian dictatorship. Nevertheless, the development of the class struggle has frustrated the social-fascist manoeuvres. The German members of the S.A.J. (Socialist Youth Organisation) could find no "middle road" and seceded as an organisation from the social democratic party of Germany.

The trend towards unity with the Communist youth in the struggle against fascism and war, as was shown by the Paris International Youth Congress, and the increasing distrust in their old leaders, are becoming more and more characteristic of the sentiments of the youth under social-fascist influence.

We see how the social democracy is resorting more and more to sham revolutionary phraseology and to "Left" manoeuvres, in order to keep the youth under its influence. A special role is played here, and this must be emphasised, by the so-called "Left" socialist youth organisations who join hands with the Trotskyists, who are now getting active in capitalist countries, and speak about the necessity of struggling for the proletarian dictatorship, about the establishment of new revolutionary (to be more exact, Centrist) parties, etc.

In the case of the Y.C.I. sections, as in the case of the C.I. sections, the discrepancy between the growing political influence and its organisational consolidation is characteristic.

The struggle of many sections of the Y.C.I., as, for example, those of China, Germany, Poland, Japan, Bulgaria, and a number of other countries, are accompanied by unprecedented revolutionary heroism and loyalty to the cause of the working class. The sections of the Y.C.I. still remain, as before, much smaller in membership than the Parties in many countries, and their role in political and social life is not sufficiently great. The mass work of our sections is still, as before, looked upon as a difficult task to perform.

If we were to put the following question: what place is occupied by work among the youth in the system of Party mass activities? the reply would have to be that this work is insignificant and is not in accordance with the sharpening class struggle.

At a time when the bourgeoisie, supported by social democracy, is carefully following the process taking place among the youth and is conducting activities among all sections of the youth, by adapting the form of its work to the needs of the youth, in most cases among us this work is entrusted to the Y.C.L. organisations. Whenever the youth question is discussed in the Party organisations, this discussion is always limited to the activities of the Y.C.L.

The Central Committee of the British Communist Party discussed the "problem" of 700 Y.C.L.ers, but we do not know of any cases of the C.C. C.P.G.B. discussing the tasks of work among those seven million youths who are members of bourgeois and reformist organisations. After the Twelfth Plenum, a Plenum of the Central Committee of the Y.C.L. of France was held. This

Plenum characterised the processes taking place among the tolling youth of France as processes based upon pessimism, disillusionment, tendencies towards suicide, etc. The Central Committee of the French Y.C.L. did not notice the growing political activity among the youth, the increasing tendencies for unity in the struggle for economic and political rights, and adopted a resolution in which the main task of the Y.C.L. is defined, not as the struggle for political and economic demands of the youth, but as the task of obtaining maximum possibilities for recreation and amusement. The resolution emphasised that the Y.C.L. must change its "gloomy face" and reorganise its work with a view of holding more balls, dances and other forms of recreation.

In November last year, after the Twelfth Plenum of the E.C.C.I., a Plenum of the Central Committee of the C.P.U.S.A. took place. This Plenum did not take up the narrow question of the work of the Y.C.L., but took up the tasks of the Party in its work among the youth. Comrade Bedacht, a member of the Political Bureau of the American Party, was the reporter on this question, and the Political Bureau submitted a draft resolution on this question to the Plenum. Both in the report and in the draft resolution (which we learned was never published), the statement is made that the American proletarian youth, not seeing its road to riches, is becoming disillusioned and this disillusionment is the source of fascism and is the basis for preparing the youth for imperialist war. Here, again, emphasis is laid on the development of cultural work among the youth, and the resolution points out that the defence of the economic interests of the youth is not the task of the youth itself, but the task of specially created bodies within the Red trade unions.

These examples of a distortion of the Comintern line in the struggle for the youth and the failure to understand this line are not isolated cases.

The Y.C.L. organisations were quick to respond to the call of the Paris Congress, and achieved considerable results in uniting the youth in connection with the Paris Congress. But what help did the Y.C.L. receive in this work from the Party organisations? In the leadership of the Belgian Party the impression prevailed that the convening of this Youth Congress for struggle against fascism and war will not call forth enthusiasm among the Belgian youth, which in essence meant the abandonment of any active participation in preparation for this Congress.

In the Scandinavian countries the leadership of the Party organisations manifested an underestimation of the growth of the anti-imperialist movement of the youth and the necessity to lead this movement.

Comrade Thorez, in addressing the Eleventh Plenum of the E.C.C.I., said:—

"At the present moment bold efforts must be made by all Parties to help the Y.C.L. This task demands the work of the whole Party. We wholeheartedly agree with Comrade Chemodanov's slogan: 'Not one Party nucleus without a Y.C.L. nucleus alongside.' We have already taken certain measures on this question."

Three years have passed since this declaration was made by Thorez, but what do we see? The already small number of Y.C.L. units has shrunk even more.

Only recently the secretary of the Party organisation in St. Denis, Comrade Lepre, who works together with Comrade Doriot, in reply to a proposal of the local Y.C.L. regarding the intensification of the work among the factory youth, stated that it is time to stop talking about factory work, and if the Y.C.L. hopes to achieve anything it must base its work upon the local (residential) organisations. This comrade was not exposed before the Party and the League for sabotaging the line of the Comintern in the struggle for the working-class youth, just as the opportunistic underestimation of work among the youth expressed by Comrade Doriot at a recent meeting of the Party active was not exposed. Was it only Lepre who came out in France against the establishment of Y.C.L. factory nuclei alongside every Party nucleus? We must give Comrade Lepre credit for coming out openly. But the discrepancy between the number of Party nuclei in the factories and Y.C.L. nuclei shows that in many Party organisations there are people who vote for the line of the E.C.C.I., but in practice sabotage the carrying out of this line.

It is not accidental that during this year we have not been able to penetrate into the mass bourgeois and reformist youth organisations, or reconstruct our mass political activities and intensify our work, especially in forced labour camps.

Comrade Pieck, for example, in his report pointed out that the Y.C.L. is organising and successfully carrying out strikes in forced labour camps in Germany. This is correct. This fact will not be disputed by anyone, but we must openly state that the leadership of the German Communist Party has been very late in taking up this question of work among the youth in forced labour camps and that the underestimation of this work which was expressed by leading Y.C.L. functionaries at the December Plenum of the Y.C.I. did not meet with the necessary rebuke on the part of the Party leadership. However, we cannot say that the Party and Y.C.L. organisations in the U.S.A., Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Great Britain, where these forced labour camps will be rapidly developed within the next year, have as seriously taken up this work as the German Communist Party and the German Y.C.L. did.

We know, for example, that the leadership of the Italian Communist Party is seriously taking up the question of activities in bourgeois mass youth organisations, but there is lack of clarity on this question among the Italian comrades. This found expression first of all in the abstract slogan which was issued by the Party in its declaration that the "Dopolavoro" association (which is actually a fascist youth organisation) should be put under the control of the workers.

We know of cases where many Party and Y.C.L. organisations express their opportunism by being afraid to work among the masses and show their inability to organise mass work. All this is covered by statements that if the Y.C.L. goes to work inside the mass bourgeois organisations, then there is a danger that the members of the Y.C.L. themselves will be demoralised.

In speaking of these basic shortcomings in the Party mass work among the youth, we cannot help but point out that in the struggle for the economic interests of the working class conducted by the Communist Party and the Red trade unions, too little attention is paid to the interests of the young workers. The youth has been taking active part in strike struggles. Nevertheless a close examination of the economic demands advanced during recent strikes reveals first of all the fact that youth demands are very seldom advanced or are brought up only in a haphazard way, because the Party organisations do not advance them. Further, a careful examination of the propaganda and agitation of the Communist Party would reveal that very little attention is devoted to agitation work among the youth.

In emphasising the shortcomings of the Party mass work among the youth, I in no way wish to remove the political responsibility for this from the Communist youth organisations and from those of us who are active in the youth movement.

The Executive Committee of the Y.C.I. has repeatedly explained to many comrades that it is impermissible to put all the blame on the Parties and thus try to conceal their own political mistakes. Such explanations have been given in the course of our practical work. However, you must understand the difficulty confronting the Executive Committee of the Y.C.I. when, in the struggle against sectarian methods of work in Y.C.L. organisations, it comes face to face with opportunistic underestimation of work among the youth on the part of the Party organisations and a sectarian approach to this fundamental problem of class struggle.

Of course we cannot take off the political responsibility, for example, from our German Y.C.L. comrades for their not understanding the changed political situation and actually beginning organisationally and ideologically to strengthen the bankrupt socialist youth organisation by sending their comrades there and trying to establish an "opposition." They claimed that they were waiting for a chance to organise a split in this organisation, and stated with false pride that the only functioning young socialist organisations in Germany are those in which Y.C.L.ers are active. Of course, there is nothing wrong about our comrades working in the socialist youth organisation, but our task is not only to establish an opposition, but to win over to our side the working-class youth which is still under the influence of the social fascists. And that is the only reason for opposition work in the S.A.J.

Similarly, we cannot remove the political responsibility from the Y.C.L.ers in Czechoslovakia, who looked upon the establishment of the united front as an aim in itself, and in the course of the struggle for the united front they entirely concealed the face of the Y.C.L. The Czechoslovakian comrades completely abstained from any exposure of social fascism, and during the preparations

for the Paris Youth Congress they actually worked together with various reactionary organisations. It is precisely because of such facts that we must all the more sharply take up the question of Party leadership and control over the Y.C.L.

Comrade Stalin, in defining the tasks of the Y.C.L., emphasised that the most important and fundamental thing for the Y.C.L. is the education of the youth in the spirit of confidence in the Communist Party, because without such confidence it is impossible to educate the youth in the spirit of proletarian dictatorship, in the spirit of struggle for socialism. The Y.C.L. is not a Party organisation, but in essence it is a Communist revolutionary organisation.

The task of the Party organisations is continually to strengthen their leadership and proletarian influence in the Y.C.L. and to direct the everyday work and development of the Y.C.L. The successes of the Y.C.L. work are primarily the successes of the Communist Party.

It is precisely this correct approach to Party leadership in the Y.C.L. that made the Chinese Y.C.L. the shock brigade of the revolutionary movement in China, in the struggle against the bourgeoisie of its own country as well as against international imperialism. It is precisely the serious attention which the Party devoted to the work of the Y.C.L. in Poland that has made the Polish Y.C.L. one of the best sections of the Y.C.I., closely connected with the youth masses and actively helping the Party in its fight against fascism. It is precisely the extraordinary attention and help that the German Y.C.L. continuously received from Comrade Thaelmann and from the leadership of the German Party as a whole which liquidated the opportunist Remmele-Neumann group, which had succeeded in striking its roots in certain organisations of the German Y.C.L., thanks to the work of Mueller and others. This attention made it possible for the Y.C.L. to reorganise its work under conditions of open fascist dictatorship. However, the same is not true in regard to all Communist Parties and all Party organisations.

One of the basic methods of Party leadership of the Y.C.L. is the appointment of Party representatives to the Y.C.L. organisations and the strengthening of the Party membership within the Y.C.L. This method has been carried out only in the case of central and district organisations but not even in all districts. In the intermediate links of the organisations, and more so in the lower units, this directive on the appointment of Party representatives has not been carried out at all. The number of Y.C.L.ers who are at the same time members of the Communist Party, constitutes a very small percentage of the total Party membership. Of course we should not forget that members of the Y.C.L., particularly under conditions of illegality, while not being Party members, still carry on revolutionary activity. But it is also correct that we cannot look upon membership in the Party and membership in the Y.C.L. as one and the same thing. The recruiting of Y.C.L.ers into the Communist Party and through them effecting the leadership of the Party and organising Party influence in the Y.C.L. is one of the most important tasks confronting the Communist Parties.

For example, we should not approach the question of Party leadership in such a formal manner as has been the case in Switzerland. Here the Party leadership could not find a qualified candidate for the post of secretary of the Central Committee of the Y.C.L. within the Y.C.L. organisation itself and it appointed a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Party, who at the same time is secretary of the Basle Party organisation and editor of the Basle Party newspaper. This comrade works in Basle, whereas the Central Committee of the Young Communist League has its headquarters in Zurich.

We should not educate our membership as does the leadership of the French Communist Party. The French Y.C.L. has for many years been marking time and not making any headway. For a long time the leadership of the French Y.C.L. was in the hands of opportunists who had no contacts with the masses and no desire to fight for the line of the Comintern.

In consideration of the fact that the French Y.C.L., and especially its leadership, was going through a crisis in this matter, the Executive Committee of the Young Communist International placed before the Executive Committee of the Communist International, and also before the Central Committee of the Party, the question of the necessity of calling a special convention of the Y.C.L. The E.C.C.I. took up the matter and gave the Central Committee of the Party in France specific directions to organise

and develop in the Y.C.L. mass work in the light of Bolshevik self-criticism, in order to transform the methods and content of this mass work. The E.C.C.I. declared the question of calling a special convention of the Y.C.L. in France to be one of the first political tasks, through which the whole Party and mass work among the youth in France could be built up through the solidifying and strengthening of the Y.C.L.

How were these directives of the Comintern accepted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of France? For a long time the Political Bureau of the Party put off the consideration of the directives about the calling of a special convention of the Y.C.L. from one session to another. And when they finally did get to it there began discussion along the line that the calling of the special convention was unnecessary, and that it would be done only as a matter of discipline.

This was a signal for the opportunists in the Y.C.L. and for those who had openly backed Charrière and against the calling of the special convention.

In July the Central Committee Plenum of the Y.C.L. of France was held. At this Plenum, in which Comrade Marty also took part, it was unanimously decided to convene the extraordinary Congress. In connection with that, the C.C. of the Y.C.L. of France prepared a special document, an open letter to all members of the Y.C.L., in which the tasks for the work of the Y.C.L. were explained in a politically correct manner.

The Party leadership had a number of copies made of this letter and sent them to all Party organisations. That was right.

But then how can one understand this, that Duclos and Raymond, who had actively helped in the liquidation of the weaknesses of the Y.C.L., who fought for its reorganisation in the spirit of the directives of the E.C.C.I., find only very weak support from the Party, while at the same time those who work against the line of the Comintern are handled by the Party leadership with liberal tolerance? We call on the French comrades themselves to answer these questions.

We are convinced that correct Party leadership and correct carrying out of Lenin's teachings on the role of the youth in the class war and the tasks of the Communist Parties in work among the youth will in a minimum time lead to overcoming the shortcomings in the mass work of the Communist Parties and youth organisations.

The extraordinary tenseness of the class struggle and the fact that we are approaching a new round of wars and revolutions places before us in all its sharpness the task of rallying the broad masses of youth for the struggle against fascism, against the preparation of new imperialist wars and counter-revolutionary attack against the U.S.S.R. We are going to fight for fulfilling this task under the leadership of the Communist International. (Prolonged applause)